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YUGOSLAVIA: BELGRADE'S EXPLORATIONS OF MILITARY COOPERATION WITH ITALY IN RECENT MONTHS REFLECT A DESIRE TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF NATO POWERS TO YUGOSLAVIA'S ISOLATED MILITARY POSITION.

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[REDACTED]

YUGOSLAV DEFENSE MINISTER LJUBICIC IN APRIL EMPHASIZED COMMON DEFENSE NEEDS IN GENERAL TERMS WITH THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN BELGRADE. SINCE THEN, YUGOSLAV MILITARY ATTACHES IN ROME AND VIENNA HAVE ATTEMPTED TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE CONSIDERING A FORMAL DEFENSE ALLIANCE.

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT BELGRADE IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING SUCH AN AGREEMENT, OR THAT IT EXPECTS ITALY TO DO SO. RATHER, THE YUGOSLAVS MAY BE ANGLING FOR SOME KIND OF UNDERSTANDING THAT WOULD ASSURE THEM THAT THEY ARE NOT WITHOUT FRIENDS. THEY PROBABLY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THESE TACTICS WILL IMPROVE THEIR CHANCES OF ACQUIRING WESTERN MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

YUGOSLAVS GENUINELY FEAR SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION DURING THE EVENTUAL TRANSITION PERIOD AFTER TITO DIES. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO HARD INFORMATION TO CONFIRM SUCH A THREAT, YUGOSLAVIA'S BASIC FEELING OF INSECURITY HAS BEEN FURTHER AGGRAVATED BY THE GROWING OBSOLESCENCE OF ITS MILITARY HARDWARE AND ITS INABILITY TO FUND PURCHASES OF NEW WESTERN EQUIPMENT. BELGRADE'S STRICT ADHERENCE TO ITS POLICY OF NONALIGNMENT HAS DEPRIVED IT OF MEANINGFUL MILITARY TIES IN EAST OR WEST AND IT NOW APPEARS TO BE ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP WAYS WHICH WILL MAKE IT LESS VULNERABLE TO MILITARY PRESSURES FROM THE EAST.

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